

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:05 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to King Hussein I of Jordan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

**Remarks Announcing Sandra L. Thurman as Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy and an Exchange With Reporters**  
*April 7, 1997*

**The President.** Thank you very much. Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you, Mr. Vice President. I'd like to join the Vice President in thanking Eric Goosby for his work as the Acting Director of the Office. And thank you very much, Patsy Fleming, for the fine job that you've done. We miss you. Thank you, Scott Hitt and all the members of the council, for the good work that you have been doing. And thank you, especially, for the meeting we had together not so very long ago, and the candor and passion of your recommendations.

America has not beaten AIDS yet, but we are getting closer, and we remain committed to the fight and to winning it. More than ever, we need a strong advocate for people with AIDS, and of course that's why we're here today. Let me begin by reiterating our goal: We want to find a vaccine against the AIDS virus and a cure for those who have the HIV infection. They have eluded researchers so far, but we are committed. The work goes on, and it will go on until we are successful. Until that day comes when HIV and AIDS no longer threaten our people, we must continue to do all we can to hit the epidemic hard with a coordinated effort of research, treatment, and prevention.

When I took office, I established the Office of National AIDS Policy because America had been turning its head away from the problem. Many Americans had not come to grips with HIV and AIDS and their consequences. Now we're learning AIDS strikes in the best of families, and from this disease, no community has immunity, gay or straight, black or white, male or female, old or young. Anyone can get AIDS, and if we're going to win this fight, we must begin with the acceptance of that fact.

It was clear 4 years ago, as it is now, that it is only with an aggressive campaign against AIDS that we will win the battle. That is what we have begun. In the first 4 years, we increased overall spending by about 60 percent. In FY 1997 alone, \$167 million will go to State AIDS drug assistance programs which provide access to medication, including protease inhibitors for low-income individuals with HIV who don't have prescription drug coverage.

We speeded the time needed to approve drugs to treat AIDS, leading to the approval of 8 new AIDS drugs and 19 for AIDS-related conditions. This has allowed many people simply to go on with their lives, to live with this disease not worry free but not in despair either.

We should all take heart that for the first time there has been a marked decrease in deaths among people with AIDS. With new treatment therapies, we hope to see even greater life expectancy. And with education and prevention, the number of estimated new HIV infections has slowed dramatically.

In our war against AIDS, the Office of National AIDS Policy plays an important role. The Office is charged with coordinating all our Federal policy and programs regarding AIDS. It also builds our partnerships with other levels of government and with private-sector communities and organizations. Our Office is charged with keeping us on track in treatment and in education and to keep our focus on research for ways to prevent and cure this disease. An AIDS vaccine could save millions of lives around the world. And we must help those who are already infected. Make no mistake, a cure has been and always will be our very first priority.

The Director of this Office must be an individual with a clear understanding of AIDS as a disease and as a social issue in America, someone who knows the scientific front as well as the human center of AIDS, someone who knows how to fight to cut through red-tape to get the job done.

I have found that person in the woman I nominate today to fill this office, Sandy Thurman. She is no stranger to those who know this issue. She's a member of our advisory council on HIV and AIDS. She's worked on the frontlines in the AIDS epidemic for

more than a decade. She's been an advocate and a catalyst at the State, local, and national levels. She transformed AID Atlanta, the oldest and largest AIDS service organization in the South, into one of the most successful projects of its kind anywhere in the country. As executive director from 1988 to 1993, she tripled its size, beefed up its budget, and made it a direct-service agency with a staff of 90 workers and 1,000 volunteers.

Her experience in running a large community-based organization makes her especially well equipped to build the partnerships we need throughout our country, for beating the AIDS epidemic will take this kind of teamwork everywhere. I am pleased that she has agreed to serve as the Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy. I've worked with her, and I can attest, she tells it like it is. She speaks the truth unvarnished. She won't hold back in this office. [Laughter] She is passionate. She is committed. She is difficult to say no to. [Laughter] And I have already assured her that she will have the support and the resources she will need, including my personal support, to succeed in this all-important task. My door is open to her.

And now I'd like for us to all hear what she has to say.

Sandy Thurman.

[At this point, Ms. Thurman thanked the President and made brief remarks.]

**The President.** Thank you very much.

**Q.** Mr. President, how do you see this czar being different from your two previous czars? What would you like to see changed? And have you given up on the so-called Manhattan-style project that you promised in '92?

**The President.** Well, first of all, I think if you look at—let me answer the second question, first. If I had told you in 1993, in January, when I was inaugurated, that we would have 8 new AIDS drugs, 19 new drugs for AIDS-related conditions, that the number of AIDS related deaths would be going down, and that the quality and length of life expectancy would expand as much as it had, you would think that we had put a pretty good amount of effort in here with a 60 percent increase in our investment.

So I think we're moving forward. What I would like to see is to rely on the President's

Advisory Council and the AIDS Office even more heavily to mobilize even more people to have support for the work we're doing in research to find a cure and also to do more at the grassroots level and to tie the efforts at the community level to what we're trying to do nationally. And I think that Sandy will do a very good job of that because of her personal experience in Atlanta.

**Q.** Mr. President, when you read—

### **Middle East Peace Process**

**Q.** Mr. President, do you think you've made any progress, sir, in your meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu? Do you think that you've been able to move the peace process closer to being back on track, as you put it earlier?

**The President.** Well, we had quite a long meeting, as you know. What are we, an hour late staring here? [Laughter] And I apologize to you for that, but it was necessary that we continue the meeting. It was a long and very thorough meeting. Now it's important for us to visit with the Palestinians, and we'll try to get this thing up and going again.

But you know how these things are—it's—I need to say not too much about it and work very hard on it. And that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to do my best to get it back on track.

**Q.** But Mr. President, Mr. President, did anything—part of the Palestinian frustration is that the Prime Minister says he wants to speed up final status talks. His position, according to them, appears to be final. I was wondering if you saw any change in that position?

**The President.** Well, I'm—again, I think the problem is the more I comment, the more I undermine the chances of success. We had a very specific, frank, candid, and long talk. And now we're going to talk to the Palestinians and see whether there is something we can do to get this thing going again. And we'll do our very best, and I'll do my best. That's all I think I should say right now.

**Q.** Thank you.

**The President.** Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Patricia Fleming, former Director, Office of National AIDS Policy, and H.

Scott Hitt, Chairman, Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS.

**Message to the Senate Transmitting Documentation on the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty**

*April 7, 1997*

*To the Senate of the United States:*

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate, the Document Agreed Among the States Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) of November 19, 1990, which was adopted at Vienna on May 31, 1996 ("the Flank Document"). The Flank Document is Annex A of the Final Document of the first CFE Review Conference.

I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State on the Flank Document, together with a section-by-section analysis of the Flank Document and three documents associated with it that are relevant to the Senate's consideration: the Understanding on Details of the Flank Document of 31 May 1996 in Order to Facilitate its Implementation; the Exchange of Letters between the U.S. Chief Delegate to the CFE Joint Consultative Group and the Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation to the Joint Consultative Group, dated 25 July 1996; and, the Extension of Provisional Application of the Document until May 15, 1997. I take this step as a matter of accommodation to the desires of the Senate and without prejudice to the allocation of rights and duties under the Constitution.

In transmitting the original CFE Treaty to the Senate in 1991, President Bush said that the CFE Treaty was "the most ambitious arms control agreement ever concluded." This landmark treaty has been a source of stability, predictability, and confidence during a period of historic change in Europe. In the years since the CFE Treaty was signed, the Soviet Union has dissolved, the Warsaw Pact has disappeared, and the North Atlantic Alliance has been transformed. The treaty has not been unaffected by these changes—for example, there are 30 CFE States Parties now, not 22—but the dedica-

tion of all Treaty partners to achieving its full promise is undiminished.

The CFE Treaty has resulted in the verified reduction of more than 50,000 pieces of heavy military equipment, including tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery pieces, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters. By the end of 1996, CFE states had accepted and conducted more than 2,700 intrusive, on-site inspections. Contacts between the military organizations charged with implementing CFE are cooperative and extensive. The CFE Treaty has helped to transform a world of two armed camps into a Europe where dividing lines no longer hold.

The Flank Document is part of that process. It is the culmination of over 2 years of negotiations and months of intensive discussions with the Russian Federation, Ukraine, our NATO Allies, and our other CFE Treaty partners. The Flank Document resolves in a cooperative way the most difficult problem that arose during the Treaty's first 5 years of implementation: Russian and Ukrainian concerns about the impact of the Treaty's equipment limits in the flank zone on their security and military flexibility. The other Treaty states—including all NATO Allies—agreed that some of those concerns were reasonable and ought to be addressed.

The Flank Document is the result of a painstaking multilateral diplomatic effort that had as its main goal the preservation of the integrity of the CFE Treaty and achievement of the goals of its mandate. It is a crucial step in adaptation of the CFE Treaty to the dramatic political changes that have occurred in Europe since the Treaty was signed. The Flank Document confirms the importance of subregional constraints on heavy military equipment. More specifically, it revalidates the idea, unique to CFE, of limits on the amount of equipment particular nations in the Treaty area can locate on certain portions of their own national territory. Timely entry into force of the Flank Document will ensure that these key principles are not a matter of debate in the negotiations we have just begun in Vienna to adapt the CFE Treaty to new political realities, including the prospect of an enlarged NATO.

I believe that entry into force of the CFE Flank Document is in the best interests of